

108

# Greatest Of All Times

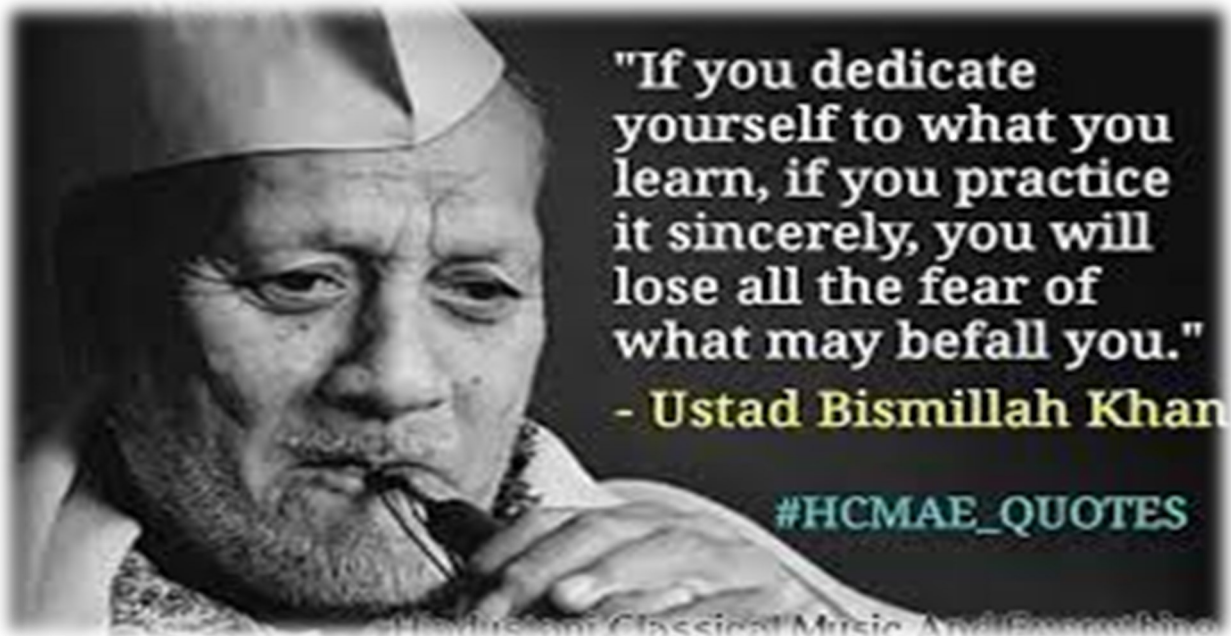
*globally selected  
PERSONALITIES*

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Compiled by:

Prof Dr S Ramalingam

21 Mar 1916 <::><::><::> 21 Aug 2006



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21 Mar 1916



21 Aug 2016

*The Wizard of Shehnai*

## Awards and recognitions

### Awards

-  [Bharat Ratna](#), India's highest civilian award. (2001)
- [Swathi Sangeetha Puraskaram](#) (1998), [Government of Kerala](#)
- [T Choudayya National Award](#) (1995), [Government of Karnataka](#)
- Fellow of [Sangeet Natak Academy](#) (1994)
- [Tahar Mausique](#) from the Republic of Iran (1992)
-  [Padma Vibhushan](#), India's second highest civilian honor (1980)
- [Padma Bhushan](#) (1968)
- [Padma Shri](#) (1961)
- [Sangeet Natak Akademi Award](#) (1956)
- [Tansen Award](#) by Govt. of [Madhya Pradesh](#).
- Three medals in All India Music Conference, [Calcutta](#) (1937)

### Recognitions

Bismillah Khan had honorary doctorates from:

- [Banaras Hindu University](#), [Varanasi](#)
- [Visva Bharati University](#), [Santiniketan](#)

Others include

- Was invited by then [Prime Minister of India](#) [Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru](#) to play [shehnai](#) on the first Independence Day (15 August 1947) in [Delhi's Red Fort](#).
- Participated in [World Exposition](#) in Montreal
- Participated in Cannes Art Festival
- Participated in Osaka Trade Fair
- India Post issued commemorative postage stamps of ₹5.00 denomination on 21 August 2008
- On the 102nd anniversary of his day of birth, Google honored Bismillah Khan with a [Google doodle](#).

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**Shehnai maestro Ustad Bismillah Khan calls on the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, in New Delhi on 30 September 2004**



**Khan on a 2008 stamp of India**



**Street in Hyderabad, Telangana, named after Bismillah Khan which was inaugurated by Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia and K Viswanath on 7 April 2013.**

## Hindustani Classical Music

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bismillah-Khan>

**Hindustani classical music**, one of the two principal types of South Asian classical music, found mainly in the northern three-fourths of the subcontinent, where Indo-Aryan languages are spoken. (The other principal type, Carnatic music, is found in the Dravidian-speaking region of southern India.) The two systems diverged gradually, beginning in the 13th century, when the Islamic conquest of northern parts of the subcontinent introduced highly influential Arab and Persian musical practices that then merged with Hindu traditions. (The influences from Muslim cultures played virtually no role in the development of Carnatic music.)

Northern India shares with the south the use of ragas (melodic frameworks for improvisation and composition), the rhythmic principles of tala (cyclic metric patterns sometimes of great complexity), and the practice of nonmetric, rhythmically "free" improvisation. Although vocal music plays an important role, instrumental music is more important in Hindustani

music than it is in Carnatic; there are some purely instrumental forms, such as the theme with variations known as *gat*.

The most prominent instruments of Hindustani music are the [sitar](#) (a long-necked fretted lute with about 30 melodic, [drone](#), and [sympathetic](#) strings), [sarod](#) (a short-necked unfretted lute with sympathetic and drone strings), [sarangi](#) (a bowed fiddle), [shehnai](#) (an oboelike wind instrument), [tabla](#) (a set of two drums played by one musician, the right-hand drum carefully tuned), and [tambura](#) (a large long-necked lute with four strings, used only to play the supporting drone, a single repeated chord).

A typical Hindustani performance, which may last well over an hour, begins with a long, nonmetric improvisation ([alap](#)) by the singer or melodic soloist, followed by *gor*, or improvisation without metric cycle but with a perceptible pulse, and eventually by the similar but faster *jhala*. Then follows the composed piece, which is performed with [improvised](#) variations—most typically [khayal](#) (a poetic form) in vocal music and *gat*, a short, rhythmically distinctive theme, in instrumental music. Here, the soloist is accompanied by the percussionist on tabla, and the improvisations often involve various kinds of virtuosic rhythmic competition and cooperation.

The centers of Hindustani music in the 21st century are the cities of Delhi, [Kolkata](#) (Calcutta), Varanasi, and Mumbai (Bombay), but, until the early part of the 20th century, smaller cities with princely courts, such as Jaipur, Agra, and [Gwalior](#), played a major role. In the early 21st century, the practitioners of Hindustani music best-known outside the subcontinent included [Ravi Shankar](#), [Ali Akbar Khan](#), and [Bismillah Khan](#).

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**Bismillah Khan**

**The Maestro from Banaras**

<https://niyogibooksindia.com/books/bismillah-khan/>

BY SINHA JUHI

Category:

Biography Books, Memoir Books, Music Books

ISBN: 978-81-89738-91-4

MRP: 795

**Bismillah Khan - Maestro from Benaras** is a book that gives the reader an insightful look into the home and heart, muse and music of one of the greatest artists that India has produced. It traces his journey from the small town of Dumraon to Benaras and thence to the world. The book follows Bismillah Khan as he grows from child to man, shagird



to ustad, pupil to legend—from his early days when he charged five rupees for a programme to the days when each performance commanded anything between five to ten lakh rupees. Bismillah Khan's life is played out against the streets, galis and muhallas of Benaras, its ghats, temples, mehfilis and musicians, bringing to life an era that has since passed. The author recreates in delightful detail the moves and manners of twentieth century Benaras, its wealthy aristocrats and courtesans and the many artists who interacted with both. The colourful strands of Benarasi society are seen as the perfect background for the extraordinary genius of Bismillah Khan. The book also lovingly portrays the whims and foibles of Bismillah Khan—an artist, whose stature as a musical legend could never quite overshadow the wit, humour and charisma of the man.

## BISMILLAH KHAN THE MAESTRO FROM BENARAS



JUHI SINHA



## Videos

### [01] Ustad Bismillah Khan - Live in London (1993)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHaEkkOhMB4> [16:36]

Experience the Magic of Ustad Bismillah Khan Live at The Queen Elizabeth Hall, London (Nov 1993)

### [02] Ustad Bismillah Khan's best Classical Melodies | Shehnai | Indian Classical music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXFTfHmnZoM> [2:54:00]

Delve into the exquisite world of classical music with Ustad Bismillah Khan's best classical melodies. Renowned for his mastery of the shehnai, Ustad Bismillah Khan brings to life the rich traditions of Indian classical music with his soulful and mesmerizing performances.

### [03] Divine Songs of Ustad Bismillah Khan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SOWXxEKywo> [1:33:33]

### [04] Festive Shehnai - Ustad Bismillah Khan | Hindustani Classical Instrumental Audio Jukebox

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqRnZWrrHhEI> [59:57]

### [05] Beautiful Relaxing Shehnai Melodies | Ustad Bismillah Khan | Indian Classical Instrumental Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmGkcXQWIoU> [56:49]

### [06] Divine Shehnai - Ustad Bismillah Khan | Indian Classical Instrumental Music | Shehnai Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkWId7Fmnik> [2:36:25]

### [07] Wedding Shehnai | Ustad Bismillah Khan | Kanyadaan Vivah Sampann Riti | Indian Classical Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzEL4CwbPew> [1:02:31]

### [08] Masterpieces of Ustad Bismillah Khan | Shankara | Hans Narayan | Indian Classical Instrumental Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tc5LU28Y3ls> [3:49:9]

[09] Ustad Bismillah Khan & Party - Live in Concert - (1987) France

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTt8VC9iOP8> [2:36:03]

[10] Ustad Bismillah Khan | Celebrating the Maestro's Musical Genius | Indian Classical Shehnai Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADUuV-QNAng> [1:04:30]

[11] Virasat-E-Bismillah: An ode to Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8cKXAfBh6U> [2:23:25]

[12] Ustad Bismillah Khan a Musical Soiree With The Shehnai Virtuoso | Indian Classical Relaxation Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRVfyxcBCrU> [1:38:28]

## Bismillah Khan

who gave Independent India its first tune at Delhi's Red Fort?

<https://www.firstpost.com/explainers/bismillah-khan-independent-india-delhi-red-fort-13804503.html>

*India took its first steps as an independent nation on August 15, 1947. The first Independence Day was made even more special with a sterling performance by Ustad Bismillah Khan from the ramparts of the Red Fort. The legendary musician personified the idea of unity and elevated the shehnai to a new level.*



India took its first steps as an independent nation on August 15, 1947.

The first Independence Day was made even more special with a sterling performance by Ustad Bismillah Khan from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

The legendary musician personified the idea of unity and elevated the shehnai to a new level.

Here's all we know about him.

### **Ustad Bismillah Khan and his musical journey**

Born as Qamaruddin Khan on March 21, 1916, Bismillah Khan is widely recognised for having introduced the shehnai from the marriage mandap to the concert hall, according to *PTI*.

Since his father was a wind instrument player in Maharaja Keshav Prasad Singh of Dumraon, he was naturally introduced to the shehnai at a very young age. He chose to take after his father, and as a result, he became lifelong friends with shehnai.

At the age of six, he relocated to Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, to live with his uncle Ali Bux 'Vilayatu' and started studying Raag and shehnai from him, as per *Economic Times*. In the early years of his career, Bismillah Khan appeared in many theatrical productions. It was at the All-India Music Conference in Calcutta in 1937 that he had his first major break.

The crowd responded positively to Shehnai's performance, which put the instrument in the limelight. Later on, he performed in West Africa, Japan, Hong Kong, Afghanistan, the US, Canada, Bangladesh, Iran, and Iraq, in addition to other regions of Europe. During his remarkable career, he participated in several high-profile global events, such as the Osaka Trade Fair, the Cannes Art Festival, and the World Exposition in Montreal, according to *The Statesman*.

Bismillah Khan's involvement with the film industry was very limited. He made an appearance in the 1957 film *Jalsaghar* by Satyajit Ray and contributed the shehnai sound for Vijay Bhatt's *Goonj Uthi Shehnai* (1959). Later, he portrayed the shehnai in Vijay's popular Kannada film *Sanaadi Appanna* (1977).

He was a sincere Muslim in practice who respected other religions and beliefs equally.

In addition to the Padma Vibhushan, he received the Tansen, Sangeet Natak Akademi, and other honours. The highest civilian distinction in India, the Bharat Ratna, was



given to Khan in 2001, making him the third classical musician to receive it. Shantiniketan and Benares Hindu University both awarded him honorary doctorates.

### **The first tune of Independent India**

Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister, invited Khan to play shehnai on August 15, 1947, at Red Fort in Delhi.

On the eve of India's first Independence, he was the only musician to have the unique privilege of playing his Shehnai.

Following the PM's speech on August 15, Khan performed annually for several years.

Thousands of homes watched Doordarshan's live broadcast of his performance.

On January 26, 1950, he also performed at India's first Republic Day celebration, as per *ET*.

### **Introducing new raga**

Khan has often stated that he feels Lord Shiv, Lady Saraswati, and Lord Krishna themselves have blessed him with the ability to create art.

He performed the new raga at a Kumbh Mela-related concert. This breathtaking "raga" was praised by spectators, who insisted that Ustad sing it again and again.

When the curious music scholars present failed to figure out the name of the "Raga," they questioned Bismillah Khan, who revealed that the Raga's name is "Kanhaira," as per *The Statesman*.

The raga and the event were featured as the front page headlines the following day. The renowned musician (flutist) Hariprasad Chaurasya was captivated by the news and approached Bismillah Khan about "Kanhaira Raga."

He answered that he had been introduced to the raga by a boy he had met on the train who was playing the flute. He gave the raga the name "Kanhaira" because he thought the child was Lord Krishna.

## His death

Khan was brought to the Heritage Hospital in Varanasi on August 17, 2006, for treatment after his health began to deteriorate.

He died on August 21, 2006, from a cardiac arrest. The Indian government observed a day of national mourning after his passing. According to legend, his Shehnai and body were buried together in the Fatemaan burial cemetery in Varanasi, beneath a neem tree.

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## Ustad Bismillah Khan's Death Anniversary

### 10 amazing facts about his life

*Ustad Bismillah Khan died on August 21, 2006, at the age of 90. He received 21 guns salute from Indian Army during his burial ceremony*



Ustad Bismillah Khan

Ustad Bismillah Khan needs no introduction, he was popularly known for his impeccable art. He was India's one of the finest classical musicians and he played Shehnai for more than eighty decades. After M S Subbalakshmi and Ravi Shankar, Bismillah Khan is the only third classical musician who received the

Bharat Ratna. He also has won several national and international awards for his performances.

Born on March 21, 1916, he was the second son of Paigambar Bux Khan and Mitthanbai. His father was the court musician of the king of the Bhojpur. He settled down with his father, Pighamber Bux Khan, at a very young age in Varanasi.

Here are some interesting facts about Ustad Bismillah Khan.

### **Ustad Bismillah Khan: 10 interesting facts about him**

1. When Bismillah Khan was born in March 1916, his name was Qamaruddin Khan. According to some stories, when his grandfather heard the news of his birth, he thanked God and said "Bismillah." Since then, his name has become Bismillah.
2. Bismillah started his music training at the age of 6 with his uncle Ali Baidu Vilayatu.
3. He travelled all over the countries like Iraq, Iran, Japan, USA to perform his show.
4. When India got Independence in 1947, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru invited Bismillah Khan to perform live on the occasion from the ramparts of Red Fort in Delhi.
5. He treated Shehnai, which is his favourite instrument, as his begum (wife) and the instrument was also buried with him at the Fatemain burial ground in Varanasi.
6. Bismillah Khan's first public appearance was at the Indian Music Conference in 1937 in Kolkata, he received appreciation for his

performance all over the country, and he got recognition from there.

7. A large auditorium was also made in Tehran (Iran) in the year 1992, which was named after Bismillah Khan. The name of the auditorium is "Talar Mousiqui Ustad Bismillah Khan."
8. The great Indian musician has received all three Padma awards, such as Padma Shri in the year 1961, Padma Bhushan in the year 1968 and Padma Vibhushan in the year 1980.
9. During the burial ceremony of Ustad Bismillah Khan, the Indian Army gave a 21-gun salute to him.
10. Ustad was popularly known for his simple living, and he lived that way throughout his life. He used to eat simple food and used to travel locally in a cycle rickshaw.

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## Obituary

### Bismillah Khan

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/aug/22/guardianobituaries.india>

Bismillah Khan, who has died of a heart attack at the age of 90, was the greatest exponent of the shehnai, the north Indian oboe, whose name derives from the Persian shah, king, and nai flute. It has seven, eight or nine holes on the staff which are stopped by the fingers. The last two holes are used for tuning and either left open or stopped with wax. The drone accompaniment of a shehnai is always another shehnai.

The instrument is played on auspicious and important occasions, both religious and secular, and is particularly associated with

north Indian weddings, when it has to project two opposite rasas, sentiments, the happiness of the occasion and, at the same time, the sadness of the young bride taking leave of her father's home.

Khan was an adept in this difficult form of musical expression. His breath control was phenomenal, especially in the long-sustained passages containing many small notes in an incredibly fast tempo.

For more than 70 years, Khan captivated his listeners with the range of his musical genius. He was also held up by many of his fellow countrymen as an icon of the secular spirit of the Indian constitution for his open-mindedness on questions of religious affiliation.

A devout Muslim, Khan recorded in an interview that, at a conference on music, a Hindu musician remarked flippantly: "The problem with Islam is that it has downgraded music." With a twinkle in his eye, Khan replied: "Sir, as you know, most of the best classical musicians of north India are Muslims. Can you imagine what would have happened if Islam had upgraded music?" All the musicians, Hindus and Muslims alike, laughed uproariously, and slapped each other on the back with exclamations of "Vah, Vah!" ("Bravo, Bravo!").

Khan belonged to a family of traditional Muslim musicians in the Shahabad district of what is now the eastern state of Bihar. His father, Paigambar Baksh, was a court musician employed in the Dumrao palace by the Raja of Bhojpur. His great grandfather Hussain Baksh and grandfather Rasool Baksh were also musicians in the Dumrao palace. In his teens, Khan was apprenticed to his uncle Ali Baksh, who lived in Varanasi, the holiest city of the Hindus, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

There uncle and nephew performed regularly in the Hindu temples and for all the ceremonies associated with the various deities of the Hindu pantheon. Khan also appeared as his uncle's accompanist at several music conferences in the 1930s and was soon noticed by aficionados. Because he was exceedingly goodlooking and endowed with a great sense of humour, he



became the favourite of maharajas and nawabs, and the darling of nationalists such as Jawaharlal Nehru.

On the death of his uncle in 1940, Khan became a soloist in his own right. It was chiefly due to him that the shehnai became so highly regarded. His home in the very centre of Varanasi became a place of pilgrimage for all Indians and foreigners devoted to the classical music of India. There he taught his many murids, followers and apprentices, including members of his immediate family.

He travelled all over India by train, but his dislike of air travel kept him away from the international scene. He was persuaded to appear at the Edinburgh Festival and the Commonwealth Arts Festival in 1965. Two years later he performed at Expo 67 in Montreal.

Khan's greatest moment came, perhaps, when he was asked to play the shehnai on All India Radio to celebrate the hour of India's independence on August 15 1947. The Indian republic made him a Bharat Ratna (Jewel of India) and the state funeral and flags at half mast are a testament to the esteem in which he was held.

He led a simple, unostentatious life in the manner of a sufi: Khan never owned a car, and liked to travel around Varanasi in a bicycle rickshaw. His wife died 10 years ago and he is survived by five sons and three daughters.

Bismillah Khan, shehnai player, born 1916; died August 21 2006

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**Ustad Bismillah Khan**

**Yuva Puraskar**

<https://vajiramandravi.com/upsc-daily-current-affairs/prelims-pointers/ustad-bismillah-khan-yuva-puraskar/>

## Overview:

Union Minister of Culture and Tourism will confer the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for the years 2022 and 2023 to 82 young artists in a special ceremony at Dr Ambedkar International Centre, Janpath, New Delhi.



- It was instituted by the **Sangeet Natak Akademi** in the name of Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan for young performing art practitioners upto the **age of 40 years in 2006**.
- It is **given annually** to outstanding young artists in the fields of music, dance, drama, folk & tribal arts and puppetry in a special ceremony held in Delhi and also outside Delhi.
- The Yuva Puraskar carries a **purse of Rs 25,000/-** (Rupees twenty-five thousand only), a plaque and an **angavastram**.
- The reason behind instituting the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar was to **encourage and motivate the young artists** in the field of **music, dance, drama, folk and tribal art** forms and other allied performing art forms of the country.
- He was a famous Shehnai musician.
- It was Ustad 'Bismillah' Khan who also played at the **first Republic Day celebration** in 1950.
- Bismillah Khan was the first Indian to be invited to perform at the prestigious Lincoln Centre Hall in the United States of America.

# 82 Young Artists to be Conferred Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puruskar for the Years 2022 and 2023.

**Posted On: 21 NOV 2024 2:27PM by PIB Delhi**

Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat will confer the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for the years 2022 and 2023 to 82 young artists in a special ceremony, tomorrow, 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2024 at 11 A.M. at Dr Ambedkar International Centre, Janpath, New Delhi. The award ceremony will be presided over by Dr Sandhya Purecha, Chairman, Sangeet Natak Akademi, Smt. Uma Nanduri, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

The award ceremony will be followed by the festival of performing arts featuring the recipient of Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar at three different venues Meghdoot Theatre Complex, Rabindra Bhawan, Copernicus Marg, New Delhi; Abhimanch Theatre, National School of Drama, Bhawalpur House, New Delhi and Vivekanand Auditorium, Kathak Kendra, Chanakyapuri from 22 to 26 November, 2024.

## **Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar**

Sangeet Natak Akademi instituted the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (UBKUP) in the name of Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan for young performing art practitioners upto the age of 40 years in 2006. The Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar is given annually to outstanding young artists in the fields of music, dance, drama, folk & tribal arts and puppetry in a special ceremony held in Delhi and also outside Delhi. The Yuva Puraskar carries a purse money of Rs 25,000/- (Rupees twenty-five thousand only), a plaque and an angavastram.

The reason behind instituting the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar was to encourage and motivate the young artists in the field of music, dance, drama, folk and tribal art forms and other allied performing art forms of the country.

The list of recipients of Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for the years 2022 and 2023 is as follows:

## Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for the year 2022

### **Field of Activity: Music -10**

- |                         |                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Samit Mallick        | Hindustani Vocal              |
| 2. Samarth Janve        | Hindustani Vocal              |
| 3. Sangeet Mishra       | Hindustani Instrumental–      |
| Sarangi                 |                               |
| 4. Partho Roy Choudhury | Hindustani Instrumental –     |
| Santoor                 |                               |
| 5. K. Gayatri           | Carnatic Vocal                |
| 6. I. Sweta Prasad      | Carnatic Vocal                |
| 7. B. Anantha Krishnan  | Carnatic Instrumental –Violin |
| 8. Sahana S.V           | Carnatic Instrumental -       |
| Veena                   |                               |
| 9. Manoj Rai            | Creative & Experimental       |
| Music                   |                               |
| 10. Nandini Rao Gujar   | Other Major Traditions of     |
| Music (Sugam Sangeet)   |                               |

### **Field of Activity: Dance -10**

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Mandakranta Roy         | Bharatanatyam             |
| 2. Kadam Parikh            | Kathak                    |
| 3. Urmika Maibam           | Manipuri                  |
| 4. T. Reddi Lakshmi        | Kuchipudi_                |
| 5. Arupa Gayatri Panda     | Odissi                    |
| 6. Dimpee Baishya          | Sattriya                  |
| 7. Akshara M Das           | Mohiniattam               |
| 8. Pradyumna Kumar Mohanta | Chhau                     |
| 9. Mingma D. Lepcha        | Creative & Experimental   |
| Dance                      |                           |
| 10. Aparna Nangiar         | Other Major Traditions of |
| Dance and Dance Theatre    |                           |

(Nangiarkoothu)

### **Field of Activity –Theatre – 08**

- |                        |                                |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Beluru Raghunandan  | Playwriting                    |
| 2. Ifra Mushtaq Kak    | Direction                      |
| 3. Harishankar Ravi    | Direction                      |
| 4. Harwinder Singh     | Acting                         |
| 5. Kumar Ravikant      | Acting                         |
| 6. Siddhi Upadhye      | Acting                         |
| 7. Mukunda Nath        | Mime                           |
| 8. Sangeet Shrivastava | Allied Theatre Arts – Lighting |

## Field of Activity: Other Traditional/Folk/Tribal Dance/Music/Theatre and Puppetry - 11

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Lata Tiwari & Sanjay Datt Panday, (Joint Award) | Folk Music & Dance, |
| 2. Chow Saratham Namchoom                          | Folk Music,         |
| 3. Sampriya Pooja                                  | Folk Music &        |
| 4. Suryawanshi Pramila Kautikrao                   | Folk Dance          |
| 5. Kumar Uday Singh                                | Folk Dance,         |
| 6. Nasarullah EPI                                  | Folk Dance,         |
| 7. Binita Devi                                     | Puppetry,           |
| 8. Mahesh Aba Satarkar                             | Folk Dance,         |
| 9. Vasava Mukeshbhai M.                            | Folk Dance,         |
| 10. Gulzar Ahmad Bhat                              | Folk Dance,         |
| 11. Moirangthem Kendra Singh                       | Nata Sankirtan,     |

## Overall Contribution/Scholarship in Performing Arts – 1

- |                                 |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Anuthama Murali              | over all |
| contribution in performing arts |          |

## Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for the year 2023

## Field of Activity: Music -10

- |                             |                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Anuja Zokarkar           | Hindustani Vocal      |
| 2. Monika Soni              | Hindustani Vocal      |
| 3. Rishi Shankar Upadhyay   | Hindustani            |
| 4. Sarang Rajan Kulkarni    | Hindustani            |
| 5. S. R. Vinay Sharva       | Carnatic Vocal        |
| 6. Ramakrishnan Murthy      | Carnatic Vocal        |
| 7. Akshay Anantapadmanabhan | Carnatic Instrumental |
| 8. Saikhom Pinky Devi       | Creative &            |
| Experimental Music          |                       |



9. Satyavathi Mudavath  
Experimental Music
10. Nagesh Shankarrao Adgaonkar  
of Music (Abhang)

Creative &  
Other Major Traditions

### Field of Activity: Dance -10

1. Apoorva Jayaraman
2. Meghranjani Medhi
3. Kalamandalam Vipin Sankar
4. Pukhrambam Reepa Devi
5. Muramalla Surendra Nadh
6. Debasis Pattnaik
7. Mukunda Saikia Barbayan
8. Vidya Pradeep
9. Sunita Mahato
10. Venkateshwaran Kuppuswamy

Bharatanatyam  
Kathak  
Kathakali  
Manipuri  
Kuchipudi\_  
Odissi  
Sattriya  
Mohiniattam  
Chhau  
Music for Dance

### Field of Activity – Theatre – 08

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Priyadarshini Mishra  | Playwriting                      |
| 2. Bendang Walling   | Direction                        |
| 3. Suvojit Bandyopadhyay   | Direction                        |
| 4. Rutuja Rajan Bagwe  | Acting                           |
| 5. Vipan Kumar   | Acting                           |
| 6. Shruti Singh  | Acting                           |
| 7. Mallikarjuna Rao Bachala  | Allied Theatre Arts –<br>Make-up |
| 8. Puneet Dimari & Amit Khanduri (Ramleela)<br>Traditions<br>Award) Uttrakhand | Other Major<br>Of Theatre (Joint |

### Field of Activity: Other Traditional/Folk/Tribal Dance/Music/Theatre and Puppetry - 11

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Angadi Bhaskar<br>Telangana           | Folk Music – Dappalu,      |
| 2. Alok Bishoyi<br>Odisha                | Folk Dance & Music,        |
| 3. M. Prakash<br>Puducherry              | Folk Dance,                |
| 4. Padma Dolker                          | Folk Music & Dance, Ladakh |
| 5. Sukhram Pahan<br>Jharkhand            | Folk Music,                |
| 6. Yusuf Khan Mewati Jogi<br>Rajasthan   | Folk Music,                |
| 7. Kalamandalam Ravisankar T S<br>Kerala | Folk Instrument (Chenda),  |

- |                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| 8. Dixit Kushal Manvantray | Folk Dance,          |
| Gujarat                    |                      |
| 9. Priyanka Shakti Thakur  | Traditional Music,   |
| Maharashtra                |                      |
| 10. Anureet Pal Kaur       | Folk Music,          |
| Punjab                     |                      |
| 11. Charu Sharma           | Folk Music, Himachal |
| Pradesh                    |                      |

### Overall Contribution/Scholarship in Performing Arts – 1

- |                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Laxminarayan Jena | over all contribution in |
| performing arts      |                          |

(☺)(☺)(☺)(☺)(☺)(☺)(☺)

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<https://www.jiosaavn.com/artist/ustad-bismillah-khan-songs/qnngkcRprkU>

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<https://mysticamusic.com/artists/ustad-bismillah-khan-shehnai>

**Ustad Bismillah Khan**

Ustad Bismillah Khan was perhaps single handedly responsible for making the shehnai a famous classical instrument. He brought the shehnai to the center stage of Indian music. He was credited with having almost monopoly over the



instrument as he and the shehnai are almost synonyms. His concept of music was very beautiful and his vision, superb. He once said, "Even if the world ends, the music will still survive" and he often said, "Music has no caste". His honorary doctorate from the Benares Hindu University and Shantiniketan bespeaks of his fame. He was the

third classical musician to be awarded the Bharat Ratna (in 2001), the highest civilian honour in India. He also had the distinction of being one of the few people to be awarded all the top four civilian awards; "Padma Vibhushan" (1980), "Padma Bhushan" (1968), "Padma Shri" (1961). He was born on March 21, 1916 at Bhirung Raut Ki Gali, in Dumraon as the second son of Paigambar Khan and Mitthan. His ancestors were court musicians in the princely states of Bhojpur, now in Bihar state. His father was a shehnai player in the court of Maharaja Keshav Prasad Singh of Dumraon Estate, now in Bihar. He received his training under his uncle, the late Ali Baksh 'Vilayatu', a shehnai player attached to Varanasi's Vishwanath Temple. Where others see conflict and contradiction between his music and his religion, Bismillah Khan saw only a divine unity. Music, sur, namaaz is the same thing. His namaaz was the seven shuddh and five komal surs. A devout Shia, Khan Sahib was also a staunch devotee of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of music. He had performed in Afghanistan, Europe, Iran, Iraq, Canada, West Africa, USA, USSR, Japan, Hong Kong and almost every capital city across the world. His music was an ocean and he felt that he had

barely reached the shore after almost 90 years of his life and that his search was still incomplete. He breathed his last on 21st August, 2006.

**Also visit:**

- [01] <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/bismillah-khan-biography-1679394198-1>
- [02] <https://indianculture.gov.in/intangible-cultural-heritage/performing-arts/master-musician-india-ustad-bismillah-khan>
- [03] <https://frontline.thehindu.com/arts-and-culture/in-search-of-ustad-bismillah-khans-banaras/article66623242.ece>
- [04] <https://doodles.google/doodle/ustad-bismillah-khans-102nd-birthday/>

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Ustad Bismillah Khan &  
his Shehnai

<https://www.varanasiguru.com/bismillah-khan/?srsltid=AfmBOopCcemo4S7f-F92ZV8S3MYtxcyAyzPB7VV07kIMinRwDSQ2qauV>

Nestled along the sacred banks of the River Ganges, Varanasi stands as an ancient city that exudes spirituality and mystique. This mystical city, brimming with history and culture, is not only a spiritual hub but also a resounding haven for music enthusiasts. Varanasi, often referred to as the "City of Light," has been a cradle for centuries of musical traditions, fostering a harmonious blend of diverse genres, rhythms, and melodies.

At the heart of this resplendent musical legacy is the incomparable maestro, **Ustad Bismillah Khan**. With his mesmerizing shehnai melodies, Bismillah Khan's name has become synonymous with the melodic soul of Varanasi. He was an embodiment of its musical heritage and an iconic figure who took the enchanting sounds of the shehnai to the world stage.

### Life of Bismillah Khan



Bismillah Khan was one of India's most celebrated classical musicians and a virtuoso shehnai player. Born in 1916 in the small town of Bhirung Raut Ki Gali in the state of Bihar, he was raised in a family of musicians and was exposed to music from a very young age.

In 1936, Bismillah Khan moved to Varanasi, where he would live for the rest of his life. Bismillah Khan had a passion for music from a young age, despite not having an interest in formal studies. He spent his childhood playing marbles on the streets of Varanasi while listening to his uncles play the shehnai. He often played the game to the rhythm of the shehnai tunes, which left a deep impression on him.



His uncle, Ali Bux 'Vilayatu' Khan, used to play the shehnai at the Jadau Sri Balaji (Maha-Vishnu) temple every morning to earn a small income. Bismillah would often accompany him and was captivated by the music, which further fueled his love for the instrument. He gave numerous concerts in Varanasi, showcasing his virtuosity and captivating audiences with his soulful playing.

Khan's ancestors were musicians who performed in temples for generations, but they were not held in high regard. However, Khan's dedication and mastery of the shehnai elevated the status of the instrument and earned him the title of "ustad" or maestro, which has become a permanent prefix to his name. Through his hard work and talent, he brought the shehnai to the world's attention and earned the respect of audiences everywhere.

Bismillah Khan became a sought-after performer, traveling across India and the world to give concerts. He performed at some of the most prestigious venues, including the Red Fort in Delhi, the Royal Albert Hall in London, and Carnegie Hall in New York. He also represented India at several international events, such as the World Exposition in Montreal in 1967 and the Festival of India in the Soviet Union in 1987.

Bismillah Khan was known for his simple and humble lifestyle. He lived in a small house in the ancient city of Varanasi, surrounded by his family and close friends. Despite his fame and success, he never lost touch with his roots and remained grounded and humble. He often quoted in interviews that he never performed for money but for the joy of it.



(l to r) – Ustad Alla Rakha (Tabla), Ustad Ali Akbar Khan (Sarod), George Harrison (lead guitarist The Beatles), Pandit Ravi Shankar (Sitar) & Ustad Bismillah Khan (Shehnai) Image by Eric Hayes



Inside the house of Ustad Bismillah Khan in Varanasi

In interviews, he also spoke about his daily routine in Varanasi, which revolved around his devotion to music and his love for the city. He would rise early every morning, perform his daily prayers, and then spend several hours practicing the shehnai. He was a disciplined musician and was known for his rigorous practice regime, which he maintained throughout his life.

Bismillah Khan was also deeply spiritual and considered his music to be a form of devotion to God. He believed that music was a way of communicating with the divine and expressing his love and devotion. This spiritual connection was particularly evident in his performances, which were infused with a deep sense of devotion and reverence.

### **Banaras & Bismillah Khan**

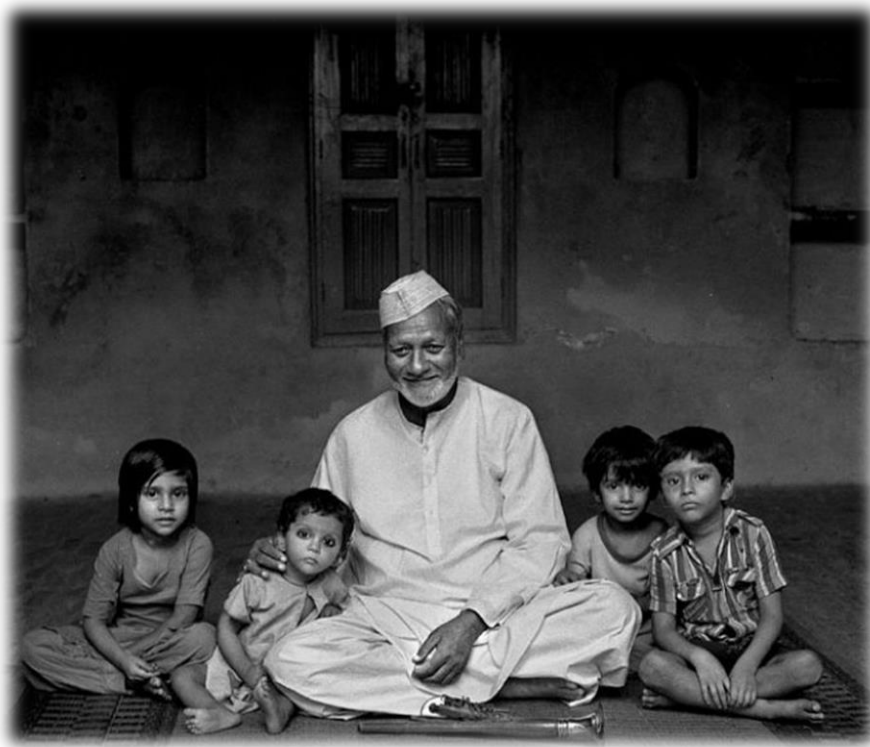
Varanasi, with its rich cultural heritage and spiritual significance, had a profound impact on Bismillah Khan's art. He was deeply inspired by the city and its rich musical traditions, and he often spoke of the role that it played in shaping his musical style and approach. The city was also a source of inspiration for his compositions, many of which were inspired by the devotional music of the region.

Khan was proud of his roots in the city and its rich musical tradition, and he never considered leaving it, even during the Partition of India. He once famously said, "I can never even think of leaving Benaras. If anyone wants to meet me, they will have to come here. I will not go anywhere, whether it's a raja, a maharaja, or anyone else."



Bismillah Khan quickly became an integral part of the cultural fabric of Varanasi, and he was widely revered and respected by its residents. He was a beloved figure in the city and was often referred to as the "King of the Shehnai." He was a symbol of the city's rich cultural heritage and a testament to its vibrant and thriving musical tradition.

Bismillah Khan's music was deeply rooted in the classical tradition of India, but he also infused it with his unique style and personality. He was a master of improvisation and his playing was characterized by its intricate ornamentation and beautiful phrasing. He was known for his ability to convey a range of emotions, from joy and happiness to sorrow and pathos, through his playing.



He was a proud ambassador of the rich cultural heritage of India and was dedicated to preserving and promoting the traditional music of his country. He was awarded numerous accolades for his contributions to music, including the Padma Shri, the Padma Vibhushan, and the **Bharat Ratna**, India's highest civilian award.





Bismillah Khan passed away in 2006, leaving behind a rich legacy of music that continues to inspire and captivate audiences around the world. He was a true icon of Indian classical music and will always be remembered as one of the greatest musicians of all time.





In conclusion, Bismillah Khan's life and career were marked by his incredible talent, his dedication to his art, and his unwavering commitment to preserving the musical traditions of India. He remains an inspiration to musicians and music lovers everywhere and his music continues to captivate and enthral audiences around the world.



## Remembering Ustad Bismillah Khan

### A Shining Example of India's Syncretic Culture

<https://thewire.in/culture/remembering-ustad-bismillah-khan-a-shining-example-of-indias-syncretic-culture>

***A devoted Muslim, Bismillah Khan saw no contradiction in also being a devotee of Goddess Saraswati. He was often seen playing at various temples in Varanasi, and on the banks of the holy river Ganges. He passed away on August 21, 2006.***



When shehnai maestro Qamruddin Bismillah Khan died of cardiac arrest on August 21, 2006, aged 90 years, the Government of India declared a day of national mourning.

He was buried with his shehnai, the wooden reed instrument known as oboe in English, at Fatemaan burial ground of his home town in old Varanasi or Banaras in northern India, with a 21-gun salute from the Indian Army.

This humble man, recipient of multiple awards including the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award, 1994, and India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, 2001, was one of the finest musicians in post-independent Indian classical music.

He was also a shining example of Hindu-Muslim unity and of India's syncretic culture. A devoted Muslim, Bismillah Khan saw no contradiction in also being a devotee of Goddess Saraswati. He was often seen playing at various temples in Varanasi, and on the banks of the holy river Ganges.

Bismillah Khan's shehnai music heralded India's independence, echoing from the ramparts of Red Fort in New Delhi on August 15, 1947. He performed at the country's first Republic Day ceremony on January 26, 1950. His recitals had become a part of India's cultural programme for the Independence Day celebration.

The audience included Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who later gave his famous 'Tryst with Destiny' speech. The maestro again came into the limelight when he performed Raga Kafi from Red Fort on India's first Republic Day ceremony, a tradition that continued for years.

Besides Ustad Bismillah Khan, the Banaras Gharana (musical tradition) has given the world Pandit Ravi Shankar among many others. They include the Padma Bhushan awardee singing duo, brothers Pandit Rajan (late) and Sajan Mishra, famous for their Khayal gayaki.

"Bismillah Khan familiarised himself with various forms of music of Uttar Pradesh, such as Thumri, Chaiti, Kajri, Sawani. Later he studied Khayal music and mastered a large number of ragas," Sajan Mishra told Sapan News over the phone from Varanasi. "His greatest moment came when India gained Independence on August 15, 1947, and he greeted the nation with his Shehnai."

Bismillah Khan introduced the world to Indian classical music. However, due to fear of flying, he turned down invitations to perform abroad for years, until

1966, when the Indian government insisted that he play at the Edinburgh International Festival.

He went on to play in many countries including Afghanistan, USA, Canada, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, West Africa, Japan, Hong Kong and in various parts of Europe. His shehnai sounded at prominent events including the World Exposition in Montreal, the Cannes Art Festival and the Osaka Trade Fair. He is also the first Indian invited to perform at the prestigious Lincoln Center Hall in the USA.

Devoted to his homeland, he always rejected any suggestions to live abroad, says producer and musician [Dr. Shailesh Shrivastava](#), talking to Sapan News over the phone from Mumbai.

His response would be, "*Wahan meri Ganga kahan hai, phir mai kaise wahan rahoonga? Aisi hawa, aisi fiza, aisa kahin paani nahi. Duniya me koi desh bhi, iss desh ka saa nahi* (Where is my Ganga there, how can I go? This air, this water, is not there. There is no country like this)."



**Ustad with Shailesh Shrivastava.**

Dr Shrivastava has a wealth of knowledge about the Ustad, having made a documentary on him titled **A Peerless Piper of Varanasi** for Doordarshan Television, where she has worked as director and producer for more than three decades.

She is herself a versatile and acclaimed musician who has sung playback, as well as folk, Bhajan, and Ghazal, besides fusing pop with folk. A recipient of the UP government's Sangeet Natak Academy Award 2012, and the Ministry of Culture's Junior Fellowship, she has a rare collection of nearly 1,500 Indian folk songs from Uttar Pradesh, western Bihar and other states. Times Music released her albums 'Chatani Chataka' (2009 -2010) and 'Hai Daiya' (1999-2000).

During the filming of her documentary for Doordarshan, she says that Khan Sahab "spared his precious moments to teach me some valuable facts about traditional Ghazal and Bhajan. He was a divine soul. His message of love, peace and *Sadbhavna* (goodwill) is ever relevant."

This message is also the need of the hour given the prevailing situation in the region, she added.

Born on March 21, 1916, in Dumraon, Bihar, into a family of traditional Muslim musicians, Khan attributed his skill to the blessings of Nath (Lord Shiva). He performed at both Hindu and Muslim ceremonies. A sufi-like figure who led a simple, unostentatious life, he never owned a car, and would travel around Varanasi in a bicycle rickshaw.

"When I asked him - who else after you Khan Sahab, he replied with a sweet smile, people will witness whosoever takes my legacy further," she added.

During the audition at All India Radio or Akashvani, if a jury member complained that a candidate was not singing in tune, Khan Sahab would ask the jury member to demonstrate the correct tune so that the candidate could know where he made a mistake, recalls Dr. Shrivastava.

His music is considered to be a perfect blend of emotions and melody also played the Shehnai for many Hindi films. "*Goonj Uthi Shehnai*" is one such movie in which he is said to have immortalised the Shehnai. He worked with Lata

Mangeshkar's rendering of the title song "*Mere Sur Aur Tere Geet*" for this film, and for the song '*Ye Jo Des Hai Tera*' in the Hindi movie *Swades* (2004).

He composed one of the hit songs in the film directed by Vijay Bhatt - "*Dil Ka Khilona Hai Toot Gaya*". This soulful song is based on a popular folk song - '*Barse Badariya Sawan Ki*' rendered by Brij Bala Devi, noted semi-classical singer who lived in Muzaffarpur, Bihar.

Bismillah Khan played the background score for movies like '*Sannadi Appanna*', a 1977 Kannada blockbuster hit, where he played Shehnai for the character Apanna played by Rajkumar.

He acted in the Hindi film '*Jalsaghar*', by Satyajit Ray and recorded duets with Vilayat Khan on the sitar, Prof. V.G. Jog on the violin, and with "N. Rajam, an exceptional violinist trained in Hindustani music by Omkar Nath Thakur, and Shahid Parvez, a young sitarist of uncommon sensitivity," recalls Sanjan Mishra.

Ustad Bismillah Khan was admitted to the Heritage Hospital, Varanasi, when his health deteriorated on March 17, 2006, and passed away a few days later.

On the occasion of Ustad Bismillah Khan's 18th death anniversary, Dr Shrivastava would like people to "come together to remember the legendary maestro who always said: 'Even if the world ends, the music will still survive'."

"Ustad Bismillah Khan always stood for communal harmony," said Dr. Srivastava. "He attributed his skills to the blessings of Lord Vishwanath. His last wish to play the Shehnai at the India Gate for the martyrs of India remained unfulfilled," she remembered.

She quoted a couplet: "*Ho yahi koshish banen, insaaf ki aisi mashaal / Rasta insaniyat ka jo sadaa roshan kare*" - Let us try to become such a torch of justice that it always illuminates the path of humanity.

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# USTAD BISMILLAH KHAN

## THE MAN WHO IMMORTALISED SHEHNAI

<https://www.saregama.com/blog/ustad-bismillah-khan-songs/>

The world-renowned Shehnai maestro [Ustad Bismillah Khan](#) was born in Bihar on March 21, 1916. His musical journey began when his uncle, Ali Bux' Vilayatu', stepped in as his tutor when he was a young child in Varanasi. In Varanasi, Ali Bux played the Shehnai at Vishvanatha, a Hindu temple. His uncle invited him to play at ceremonies for Hindu deities as well as weddings. In addition to learning numerous musical forms and ragas, Ustad Bismillah Khan improvised patterns that had previously been considered impossible by the Shehnai. The Shehnai, traditionally used only for ceremonial purposes, was elevated to classical status during his performance at the All-India Music Conference in Kolkata in 1937. Since then, he has performed and recorded at concerts and on the radio.

Despite being a devout Muslim, Ustad Bismillah Khan performed at both Hindu and Muslim ceremonies. He was widely recognized as a symbol of religious harmony. In 1947, Bismillah Khan earned the rare honour of playing India's Shehnai on the eve of independence. Since then, he has continued to perform at the Red Fort in Delhi, right after the Prime Minister's speech on August 15. It was Bismillah's performance that dominated Independence Day celebrations for many years. Doordarshan broadcast the performance live, reaching thousands of households.

In addition to playing the Shehnai for many Hindi films, the versatile musician is considered to be a master of musical emotion and melody. One of them is '[Goonj Uthi Shehnai](#),' a movie where he is said to have immortalised the Shehnai. Other films he worked on include [Satyajit Ray](#)'s Jalsaghar and a Kannada-language film [Sanaadi Appanna](#).

In the post-independence era, Ustad Bismillah Khan dominated Shehnai recitals, continuing the legacy of classical music. He was a pure artist and music lover as he always believed that music would endure even if the world ended. Music was his means of spreading the



message of brotherhood among Hindus and Muslims. Throughout his career, he proclaimed that music has no caste.

Bismillah Khan never wavered from his roots; despite the fame he achieved. The holy city of Benares was his home, and he never acquired wealth or materialistic possessions. It was because he loved his city that he declined an offer of a permanent visa for settling down in the US. His only material possession was his Shehnai, which he slept with. Such was his love for music.

While Ustad Bismillah Khan did not accept many as his disciples, who otherwise would have continued his legacy, he made a lasting impact on music. With the introduction of the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar in 2007, the Sangeet Natak Akademi announced an award dedicated to young dance, music, and theatre performers. Many eminent authors have written biographies of Bismillah Khan. These biographies include 'Bismillah Khan and the Seat of shehnai' by Rita Ganguly, 'Bismillah Khan: The Maestro from Benaras' by Juhi Sinha and 'Shahnai Vadak Ustad Bismillah Khan' by Murli Manohar Shrivastava.

With our Ustad Bismillah Khan playlist, you can hear all of his majestic raagas and the humble sound of his Shehnai. In addition to Morning Mantras and Shehnai, the playlist contains Jugalbandi by Ustad Vilayat Khan, Yaman by Ustad Bismillah Khan, various Ragas by Bismillah Khan, Bismillah Khan's Madhumat Sarang and Bhairavi, Shehnai Recital, and many more. Download all these albums of Ustad Bismillah Khan and relive the magic of his Shehnai. You can also listen to all the Ustad Bismillah Khan songs on Saregama Carvaan.

Having suffered a cardiac arrest, Ustad Bismillah Khan passed away on August 21, 2006, at the age of 90. His Shehnai was also buried with him in his grave at Fatemain burial ground, under a neem tree. In addition to declaring a day of national mourning, the Indian Army fired their trademark salute, marking the maestro's departure.

We would not have realized the true potential of Shehnai without Bismillah Khan. Such was his impact on popularizing the subcontinental

instrument Shehnai, which belongs to the oboe class. The instrument once thought of as a folk instrument has been recognized as being a classical instrument. Further, it attracted Asian music lovers and made millions of Westerners acknowledge and appreciate the potential of Shehnai, all thanks to Bismillah Khan. He had fallen in love with his instrument so much that he would often refer to it as his 'Begum.' Falling in love with something is one thing; making millions of others fall in love with it is another. It is precisely what the legendary musician accomplished in his time as the world's most loved Shehnai player.

Listen to Ustad Bismillah Khan's songs with **Saregama** and get ready to be blown away by it's charming tunes. [Cited Web Lunk].

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**Ustad Bismillah Khan...**

<https://spicmacay.org/ustad-bismillah-khan>



**Kiran Seth**



Ustad Bismillah Khan was one of the finest human beings I have ever met. He was a great musician - we all know that. But he used music to transcend it. "Yeh to ek ibadat hai (This is just a prayer)", he would say. He was on a different level, and it showed on his face - almost childlike and smiling. At namaaz time, he would request all guests to leave. He was one of the most beautiful examples of our composite heritage. Sitting with him in his small barsati room in Varanasi, he once told me that he was playing the shehnai on the banks of the Ganges one day when the Goddess Ganga rose out of the waters and blessed him for the lovely note that he had played. He narrated this with such conviction and glow in his eyes that I was moved to tears. Almost every time that I have sat at his feet and interacted with him, he has shaken me to the core. His complete faith in the spiritual domain irrespective of the religious order has always inspired me. Some of his quotable quotes are: "Hame paisa chahiye, par sirf paisa Nahin (I want money, but not just money)"; "Insaan ki pehchan hai uski jaban (A person's character is determined by how she keeps her word)". And he was one who lived by what he said. At the SPIC MACAY annual convention at Dehradun in the early nineties, Ustad Bismillah Khan was scheduled to give the concluding recital of classical music overnight. The whole group had been booked by a train reaching Dehradun, one day earlier. The tickets were waitlisted, but we had contacted the Railway Board to get them confirmed. This did not happen and the group could not board the train at Mughalsarai. We were very taken aback. Many

people coming solely to listen to Khan sahib would go back disappointed. In those days, there was only one flight from Varanasi to Delhi (there were no flights to Dehradun), and there were no SUVs. The only way that we could have the whole group reach on time was to fly them down to Delhi and have a matador take them from the airport on a whole night journey to Dehradun. Very hesitatingly, I suggested this to Khan sahib on the phone. His reply was: "Jab hamne vayda kiya hai, hum use nibhayenge (When I have given a word, I will honor it)." He reached Dehradun in the early hours of the morning just in time for his concert. I suggested that we postpone his program to the afternoon so that he could rest a little. He asked me if people were there in the hall. When I replied in the affirmative, he decided to go straight onto the stage. He gave a memorable concert. That was Ustad Bismillah Khan.

I first met Khan Sahib in 1978 in Crown Hotel, Fatehpuri in Chandni Chowk. I had expected him to be staying at a five-star hotel, but when I went there, I found this unshaven man wearing a lungi and a baniyan, sitting on the floor. I had gone to request him to perform for the students. He heard me out, at the end of which he asked, "Par paisa kitna doge? (But how much money will you give?)" When I told him that we had only a small dakshina to offer, he immediately refused. I tried hard to argue with him, but he would not oblige. He said that he had a large family of his own and of his musicians to look after and that he would not perform unless he was paid properly. I had given up and was preparing to leave when he asked me to sit down. He talked to me some more, and realizing the genuinity of the effort, he finally gave his consent. This gave SPIC MACAY a boost. After that, he performed all over India for this movement. In fact, probably his last public appearance was at the SPIC MACAY convention in Jaipur on June 19th, 2006.

Like all human beings, he had his failings. His temper scared many people including his family and accompanists. However, he would become normal very soon and would never harbor any ill feelings towards anyone. The Padmashri, Padmabhushan, Padmavibhushan,

Bharat Ratna and yet the 'no airs attached' Ustad Bismillah Khan will be remembered by us for a long long time.

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# Bismillah Khan

Personality / By Archana Singh / July 11, 2023

Ustad Bismillah Khan was a great Indian shehnai maestro of Benares and awarded with the Bharat Ratna in the year 2001 being the third classical musician. Bharat Ratna is the uppermost national honour in India. He got the fame worldwide for performing the shehnai more than eight decades.

<https://www.varanasi.org.in/bismillah-khan>

# Biography of Bismillah Khan

## Birth history and background

He was born in the bihari Muslim family at the Bhirung Raut Ki Galim, Dumraon, Bihar at 21st March in 1916. He was the second son of the Paigambar Khan and Mitthan, named as Qamaruddin in order to rhyme with his brother Shamsuddin. It is considered that his grandfather, Rasool Baksh Khan called him as a Bismillah after caring him as a newborn. It is considered that the predecessors of the Bismillah Khan were court musicians and they accustomed to perform in the Naqqar khana at the princely states of Bhojpur (Currently Bihar). Bismillah Khan's father was used to performing shehnai at the Maharaja Keshav Prasad Singh court of the Dumraon Estate, Bihar.

It is believed that when he was just six, he went to the [Varanasi](#) and completed his training under the guidance of his uncle, the Ali Baksh Vilayatu. His uncle was playing shehnai at the [Kashi Vishwanath Temple](#) in Varanasi.

## Religious history

He was the great follower of the Saraswati (the Hindu Goddess of wisdom and arts) even he was from Muslim religion. He was also fan of the many Indian musicians and played shehnai at the Hindu temples



including the renowned Vishwanath Temple at the banks of the river Gange in Varanasi. He had performed for divine master the Prem Rawat.

### Career history of Bismillah Khan

Perhaps he was the only one performing the shehnai (a famous classical instrument) single-handedly. In the All India Music Conference Calcutta in 1937; he gave shehnai the center stage of Indian music. He was one of the best musicians in the Indian classical music and he is renowned for his monopoly over the shehnai and Hindu-Muslim unity. In his whole life he had played shehnai to his audiences all across the world and spread the message of peace and love through his music. He was fully dedicated to his art and even it is also considered that he referred his shehnai as his begum after the death of his wife. On his death, shehnai was also buried with his body.

### His performances at the Red Fort in Delhi

Bismillah Khan had won the rarest rare honor of performing at the Red Fort in Delhi on the evening of the Independence Day of India in 1947. He also had performed the raga Kafi at the eve of first Republic Day ritual on 26 January in 1950 from the Red Fort. This performance of him is added as a cultural part of the Independence Day celebrations of India and his show is telecast every year on the 15th August on Doordarshan channel. Doordarshan channel broadcast the live performance of shehnai maestro just after the prime minister's speech at Lal Qila in Old Delhi. This custom is followed from the period of Pandit Nehru.

### Filmy history

Bismillah Khan had a brief history in the Indian movies. He has played his shehnai for the role of Rajkumar in the Kannada movie Sanaadi Appanna. He acted in Jalsaghar (a movie by Satyajit Ray) and played shehnai in Goonj Uthi Shehnai in 1959. Film director the Goutam Ghose has directed the Sange Meel Se Mulaqat upon the life of Bismillah Khan.

### His student life

He rarely accepted students. He met with the Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji (present master of Namdhari Sikhs) and saw the very brilliant youngster, Baljit Singh Namdhari, playing the tarshenai. Bismillah Khan welcomed Baljit Singh Namdhari as a student. He accepted two more



students, Kirpal Singh and Gurbaksh Singh Namdhari playing tarshenai in 1999. His another student is Usthad Hassan Bhai (at present in Kasaragod).

### His personal life history

He got illness on 17th August of 2006 and admitted to the Heritage Hospital, [Lanka Varanasi](#) for his treatment. He died just after the four days of his admission into the hospital on 21st August of 2006 due to the chronic cardiac arrest. He left behind him a big family of five sons, three daughters and a large number of grandchildren.

The Government of India has declared his death day, a day of national mourning. His body was buried together with his begum, Shehnai at the Fatemain burial ground in the [Varanasi](#) beneath the neem tree. His body was buried with the 21-gun salute from the Indian Army.

### Legacy

Ustad Bismillah Khan got the Yuva Puraskar (for young artists in the field of music, theatre and dance) in the year 2007 in his honour.

### Awards and Recognitions

- Awarded with the Bharat Ratna in 2001.
- Become fellow of Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1994.
- Got Talar Mausiquee from Republic of Iran in 1992.
- Awarded with the Padma Vibhushan in 1980.
- Awarded with the Padma Bhushan in 1968.
- Awarded with the Padma Shri in 1961.
- Got Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1956.
- Got Tansen Award by the Government of Madhya Pradesh.
- Got three medals in the All-India Music Conference in Calcutta in 1937.
- Got the Honour of Best Performer in All India Music Conference in the Allahabad in 1930.
- Bismillah Khan had honorary doctorates from [Banaras Hindu University](#), Visva Bharati University and Santiniketan.
- He was requested to come to play shehnai at the first Independence on 15th August, 1947 in Delhi Red Fort by the Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.
- He had participated in the World exhibition in Montreal.
- He had participated in the Cannes Art Festival.
- He had participated in Osaka Trade Fair.

- He got his 80th birthday celebrated by the World Music Institute in the New York.

## **Frequently Asked Questions on Ustad Bismillah Khan**

### **Q.1 What lesson did Bismillah Khan teach us?**

**Ans.** Ustad Bismillah Khan can teach us two very important lessons about life: dedication and being honest about your work.

### **Q.2 How is Bismillah Khan a symbol of India?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan was a symbol of how India's different religions could work together. He was a very religious Muslim, but used to play during the morning Aarti at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi. He also played at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, a holy place for the Sikh people.

### **Q.3 Why was Bismillah Khan died?**

**Ans.** On August 21, 2006, he had a heart attack and died.

### **Q.4 Why did Bismillah Khan get Bharat Ratna?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan received Bharat Ratna because with his concerts, he kept classical music alive. He was a strong supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity, and he used his songs to spread the idea of brotherhood.

### **Q.5 What was the life story of Bismillah Khan?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan was born in Dumraon, Bihar, on March 21, 1916. Khan spent his whole life playing the shehnai with all his heart. Khan is known for having a simple life. He had won the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, and Bharat Ratna.

### **Q.6 Why Bismillah Khan loves India?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan has a lot of love for India and Banaras. He says that when he goes abroad, he misses the holy Ganga and India.

### **Q.7 Why did Bismillah Khan refused to leave India?**

**Ans.** He loved India so much that he never wanted to live anywhere else. So, whenever he was in a different country, he always wished to go to Hindustan.

### **Q.8 What was the biggest achievement of Bismillah Khan?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan got the Padma Shri for his work in Indian traditional music in 1961. He also won the Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, and the Bharat Ratna in 2001.

**Q.9 What did Bismillah Khan do as a 5 year old?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan used to sing the Bhojpuri song "chaita" when he was five years old in the Bihariji temple in his home town of Dumraon, Bihar. At the end of the song, the local Maharaja gave him a big laddu that weighed 1.25 kg as a reward.

**Q.10 What inspired Bismillah Khan to invent ragas?**

**Ans.** The moving water of the River Ganga gave him ideas for making up new "ragas" that were thought to be out of the shehnai's range at the time.

**Q.11 Why did Bismillah Khan refuse to USA?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan turned down a request from one of his students to open a shehnai school in the U.S. because he did not want to leave Hindustan, especially Banaras, the Ganga, and Dumraon.

**Q.12 Why was Bismillah Khan so much attached to Ganga?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan grew up on the banks of the Ganga River. He also learned to play the shehnai there. This is why he loved the Ganga River so much.

**Q.13 What was the conclusion of Bismillah Khan?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan came from a musical family and hence took a keen interest in music. He teaches us a very important lesson about life. People get ahead in life through hard work and dedication.

**Q.14 What happened when Bismillah made his first trip to Afghanistan?**

**Ans.** Upon his first visit to Afghanistan, King Zahir Shah was overwhelmed by him that he awarded him with rare Persian carpets and other gifts.

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Bismillah Khan's Journey in Cinema

<https://phamoxmusic.com/bismillah-khan/>

Bismillah Khan, the legendary shehnai player, showcased his immense talent not only in the world of music but also made a mark in the realm of Indian cinema.

His extraordinary contributions to the cinematic world added a new dimension to the film industry.

From captivating melodies to soul-stirring compositions, Bismillah Khan's presence in cinema was nothing short of magical.

### **Goonj Uthi Shehnai**

In the Hindi film 'Goonj Uthi Shehnai,' the shehnai recitals by Bismillah Khan himself resonated with audiences, creating an unforgettable cinematic experience.

It also featured performances by other renowned musicians like Abdul Halim Jaffar Khan and Amir Khan.

The movie later became a blockbuster, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of the viewers.

With its mesmerizing music composed by Vasant Desai, 'Goonj Uthi Shehnai' stands as a testament to Bismillah Khan's mastery.

Undoubtedly, the music and Bismillah's performance highlight his ability to captivate audiences through the silver screen.

### **Sanaadi Appanna**

Bismillah Khan's cinematic journey continued with the Kannada film 'Sanaadi Appanna.'

In this remarkable film, Bismillah Khan, along with his troupe, immersed themselves in the creation of music.

Interestingly, the music they created perfectly complemented the story of a rural shehnai artist portrayed by Dr. Rajkumar.

Their collaboration later resulted in a cinematic masterpiece, with the music composed by G. K. Venkatesh leaving a lasting impact on the audience.

### **Sange Meel Se Mulaqat**

Furthermore, Bismillah Khan's life and musical legacy were beautifully captured in the documentary 'Sange Meel Se Mulaqat.'

Directed by Goutam Ghose, this documentary certainly provided a glimpse into the maestro's journey.

It showcased his humble beginnings as a young shehnai player and his ascent to becoming one of India's greatest musical treasures.

Through interviews and personal anecdotes, 'Sange Meel Se Mulaqat' sheds light on Bismillah Khan's growth and musical brilliance.

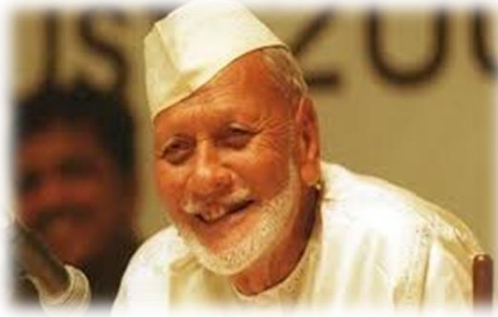
It also highlighted his invaluable contributions to the worlds of music and cinema.

In short, Bismillah Khan's remarkable journey in cinema serves as a testament to his versatility and artistic genius.

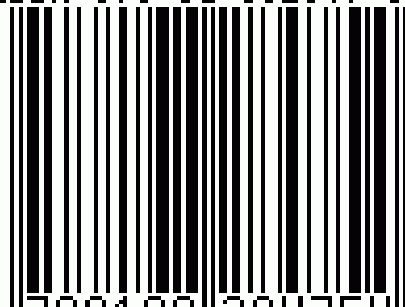
It highlights his ability to touch the hearts of people through his magical performances, whether on the stage or on the silver screen.

His presence in the cinematic world continues to inspire and awe audiences, leaving an everlasting legacy that will be cherished for generations to come.

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